

# News Release



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Environmental News:**

## Crystal Cove Whale Fossils Unveiled

Two spectacular fossil specimens are now on display for public viewing at the Crystal Cove State Park Historic District visitor center. The fossils, discovered just last month in the surf zone south of Pelican Point, are believed to be the skull and body portion of a cetacean (small baleen whale or large dolphin), between five and fourteen million years old. Local scientists are working with park officials to identify the specimen and to provide details of its ancient world.

According to state park volunteer Dr. Rick Behl, the fossil is an excellent example of the rich marine fossil deposits found in the Monterey Formation that outcrops across southern Orange County and makes up the cliffs and tide pools of Crystal Cove State Park. Behl, who is a professor of geology at California State University Long Beach and leads geology walks for park visitors, supported the decision by park officials to record the find and subsequently move it to a stable location for protection and public education. "Most fossil discoveries in the state park are in sensitive and fragile areas and must be left in place and kept mostly secret for fear of accidental damage, vandalism, or theft," said park Lifeguard Supervisor Ken Kramer. "In this case, the likelihood of destruction from beach erosion and wave action compelled us to take immediate protective steps by relocating it," he added. The fossil was discovered in a large boulder that was split in two by natural processes. Both pieces were carefully moved to the visitor center and are on public display from 8AM to sunset daily.

Natural movement of beach sand exposed the fossils, which were discovered by several beachgoers. "Looking at these fossils you can't help but to wonder what it was like ten million years ago, when this area was deep ocean teeming with life" Kramer said. Park officials hope the public display of the fossils will serve as a connection to natural history and a reminder of the importance to preserve and protect all geological features in the park.

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